

Yoorrook media guidelines

Last updated: 20 February 2023.

The First Peoples of Victoria have called for truth telling for generations. Colonisation impacted land, language, lore and people's lives – and these impacts continue today. The true story of these impacts on Victoria's First Peoples must be told.

As a member of the media, you have a critical role in sharing these truths with all Victorians. Your ethical, respectful and impartial reporting will challenge outdated public perceptions and ultimately help create a public record of First Peoples' experiences of colonisation in Victoria.

The following Guidelines are to help media report on Yoorrook's work and apply to all interviews with people telling their truth as well as Yoorrook's hearings, forums and events.

These Guidelines may be varied, changed or replaced from time to time.

Media Facilities

Hearings and other truth telling forums are open for journalists to attend in-person unless advised otherwise.

Journalists attending hearings in-person at Yoorrook's Collingwood hearing room will have access to a table, power point and wifi in the gallery section of the hearing room and an office room in the public area of the building.

Where possible, Yoorrook will provide similar media facilities at hearings and forums that occur away from the Collingwood hearing room, however this will be dependent on the venue and advised on a case-by-case basis.

Journalists wishing to attend hearings or other truth telling forums and events can contact the Yoorrook media team to discuss access at communications@yoorrook.org.au or 0408 847 385.

Live streaming of hearings will also be made available through a webcast on the Yoorrook website.

Interviews, Recording and Filming

Conducting your own filming, audio recording or professional stills photography at hearings, forums and events can be arranged with the Yoorrook media team, provided this is consented to by the witness, counsel and commissioners. This is to take place from a designated area inside the hearing room, as advised by Yoorrook's media team. Journalists may take photos from their seat within the hearing room unless advised otherwise.

Media must not interview witnesses, Commissioners or Yoorrook staff within the hearing room, however interviews may take place outside the hearing room by prior arrangement.

Yoorrook may at any time revoke media access if:

- the media or someone acting on behalf of the media breaches these Guidelines or any condition of authority to cover the hearing, forum or event;
- witnesses or participants are subjected to unreasonable media pressure outside the hearing, forum or event premises;
- the media undertakes unauthorized filming or photography or audio recording;
- Yoorrook determines that the rights of any participant may or will be prejudiced if coverage continues; or coverage of the hearing, forum or event is disrupting the inquiry.

Yoorrook will usually arrange a photographer for major events and forums. Images can be shared on request where available.

Restricted, Closed or Excluded Person(s) Orders

Consistent with its Letters Patent, Yoorrook is committed to providing a safe, supportive and culturally appropriate forum for First Peoples to tell their truth with dignity. This includes accommodating, to the extent possible, First Peoples' choices in how they wish to participate.

Yoorrook is also obliged to adopt practices and approaches in the conduct of its work to minimise harm and re-traumatisation for First Peoples. To that end, there are several mechanisms that Yoorrook will use if and when necessary or appropriate to protect witnesses and evidence.

Yoorrook will notify parties and the public by posting a copy of any relevant order on its website.

Restricted or 'closed' hearing orders

In some circumstances, it may be necessary or appropriate for part or all of a witness' evidence to be provided in a restricted or 'closed' hearing in accordance with section 24 of the *Inquiries Act 2014* (the Act).

Restricted publication orders

In some circumstances, it may be necessary or appropriate to prohibit or restrict the publication of certain information or evidence produced in a hearing in accordance with section 26 of the Act. For example, for reasons of personal or cultural sensitivity or having regard to a witness' entitlement to Indigenous Data Sovereignty protections.

Excluded person(s) orders

Yoorrook may make an excluded person(s) order upon receipt of an application by a witness or a person granted leave to appear, in accordance with section 24 of the Act.

Publication of Transcripts and Documents

Subject to any restricted or closed hearing orders or restricted publication orders, the following items will be published on Yoorrook's website as they are available:

- (a) video recordings of hearings
- (b) transcripts of evidence
- (c) witness statements
- (d) documents received into evidence

Material published on Yoorrook's website is available for media to publish subject to attribution. Video and audio recordings of hearings for broadcast may be provided by Yoorrook on request.

For more information, please contact the Yoorrook media team via communications@yoorrook.org.au or 0408 847 385.

Accessibility

Yoorrook will be implementing measures to ensure accessibility. We encourage media to do the same and include captions, image descriptions, alt-text, Easy English, and audio descriptions as part of their coverage.

Speaking with People Telling their Truth

First Peoples will be telling their truths in a variety of ways through Yoorrook such as yarning circles, submissions, public hearings, and round table discussions. They may be sharing personal stories or stories on behalf of their family, community or organisation.

Truth telling may be a liberating experience for some. It may also be daunting and distressing.

While Yoorrook provides a way of recording the resilience and strength of First Peoples, it will also highlight the injustice, violence and exploitation visited on First Peoples since colonisation.

Yoorrook will offer social and emotional wellbeing and legal support for First Peoples to assist them throughout the truth telling process. Ensuring the social and emotional wellbeing of First Peoples extends to supporting those that want, to tell their truth publicly through the media.

Prior to attending a hearing, Yoorrook staff will speak to witnesses about their preferences regarding media engagement as well as how they would like any images taken of them by Yoorrook to be used, and whether they can be shared with media. It is advised that journalists speak to Yoorrook's media team before approaching witnesses for media interviews or photos.

We ask that you use this guidance as a way of creating a safe platform for that truth telling to occur.

It is vital that media approach any conversation or interview with people telling their truth sensitively. Whether they choose to discuss specific details with the media or not, many people telling their truth will be trauma survivors or reflecting on distressing stories from their family's past.

You should:

- Respect and receive the stories of truth tellers shared with you. As with other survivors of injustice where truths have been hidden, there is a long history of First Peoples not being believed and heard. Yoorrook's letters patent recognise First Peoples' cultural and legal practices of storytelling and witnessing as legitimate forms of evidence.

- Discuss appropriate areas of questioning with the person before beginning the interview and refrain from asking on-the-spot questions about traumatic subjects without giving prior warning.
- Ask the interviewee how they would like to be identified in the story including whether they would like their nation or clan referenced.

Support

Disturbing and distressing content will emerge during Yoorrook’s hearings, forums and events.

We encourage media to include details about support services in their coverage including 000 and [13YARN](#), the first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. 13YARNs offers confidential one-on-one yarning opportunities with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Further Information

For more information about the conduct of hearings, see Yoorrook’s Practice Directions published on the website.

For specific guidance on the use of language and terminology when referring to First Peoples, please refer to the [Diversity Arts Handbook: Reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Issues](#).

For general enquiries in relation to these Guidelines, please call 0408 847 385 or email communications@yoorrook.org.au.